

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: May 14, 2015

Agenda Item: 2015 HB 454 Hunting Access Agreements

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

Under the provisions of 87-2-513 MCA, FWP received the authority to issue either-sex or antlerless elk permits to landowners for management purposes. The landowner must offer free public elk hunting, meet the various conditions of the statute, and enter a contractual public elk hunting access agreement with FWP.

The contract defines the areas open to public elk hunting, the number of elk hunting days that will be allowed on the property, and other factors that FWP and the landowner consider necessary for the proper management of elk on the landowner's property.

The Swanz Hunting Access Agreement specifically states that in return for allowing access to elk hunters, Mr. Swanz, or a family member, would receive one 411-21 either-sex permit. In turn, FWP would issue four additional 411-21 permits from the already randomized list of unsuccessful applicants for that license permit type (LPT). Successful applicants could only hunt on the Swanz deeded property. This agreement was first used in 2002 and has been reapplied annually since then based upon continued positive post-hunt evaluations. The proposed agreement for 2015 represents no change from the 2014 agreement.

Public Involvement Process & Results

The Swanz agreement has received public review in previous years via the Commission's hunting season setting process. To date, that review has generated relatively few public comments. Additionally, the post-hunt evaluations have sought feedback from all identified hunters and the landowner. To date, the evaluations confirm that agreement terms, and reasonable expectations, are generally being met. The public comment period for any adopted proposal will run through 5 p.m., Monday, June 29, with final action at the July Commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis

Failure to approve this agreement may result in reduced public elk hunting access in this area.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends the Commission approve for public comment the proposed Swanz Hunting Access Agreement. Agreement terms have been met with positive reviews received on this working access opportunity with no adverse resource impact identified.

Proposed Motion

I move that the Fish & Wildlife Commission adopt the proposed Swanz Ranch hunting access agreement for public comment as presented by FWP.